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ABSTRACT

This paper details how a service learning component has been incorporated into the art history curriculum at Gettysburg College (Pennsylvania). The service learning work involves a cataloging project of the archives of the Carlisle Indian School nearby. The project is designed to provide native groups throughout North America with information they need from the archive. The first phase of the work involves cataloging all of the periodicals published by the Carlisle School, focusing on the names, tribal and agency affiliations of any students mentioned. The information is then transferred into a database for ease of access. The following phase will require students to do research for any native people requesting information on their relatives, coordinating the research with the National Archives in Washington, D.C, the Carlisle Indian School archive photo files, and the Cumberland County (Pennsylvania) Historical Society. The paper notes additional benefits of the project to include student recognition of stereotypical attitudes and assumptions about native peoples through access of the primary sources, as well as the questions of self image and the effect of the Indian School education on native self-definition in the past as well as today. (EH)

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Ethnic Stereotyping, Alternative World Views and Community Service

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If higher education is to remain a viable force in today's world, it must leave its 19th century elitist models and their parochial interests behind and address both the vast areas of knowledge left untouched by those narrow definitions of education, as well as the monumental problems of the global community. The growing intersection of community service and curriculum provides an effective way to promote these goals, in a host of varied and extremely useful ways. A crucial element in the restructuring process will be the creation of curricular structures and pedagogical models that reflect the alternative life styles and world views of many in the non-western world. Incorporating a service learning component into the art history curriculum at Gettysburg College has accomplished much along these lines.

Because of its religious affiliation, however nominal, Service Learning has been an aspect of the educational process at Gettysburg for a long time. However, only a small fraction of the student body was ever involved. Service Learning (or community service) became an important part of the co-curricular program at Gettysburg only about eight years ago. At that point, the college chaplain (whose office had always been the contact point for service-related programs) and interested faculty began a formal program of Service Learning opportunities for students, during the weeks between the Fall and Spring semesters. The students and a faculty leader travelled to locations throughout the United States and beyond to perform special service projects, living and working

with members of the communities involved.

From the beginning, Native American reservations were important locations for those projects. I was involved from the outset, particiularly because of my primary research area, the Arts of Native North America, and the courses I teach regularly in that field. The positive benefits of these programs were immediately apparent, enhancing the intellectual and academic, as well as the personal development of our students. Eventually half credit courses were developed in connection with these trips, to take better advantage of the special results they produced and to give them some formal structure. A strictly academic component was added to the service elements, of course, which enhanced the experience of the students within each community, as well as maintaining consistent academic standards for course credit across the curriculum.

A mirror image of this structure within the traditional curriculum itself was the next and rather obvious step. It was only a short time before the newly founded Center for Public Service on our campus began to solicit proposals for courses in the regular curriculum that included a service learning component as one of the course requirements. The request was accompanied by a financial incentive, too, a crucial element for a faculty already stretched thin. One time grants were awarded to any professor willing to develop such a course, to pay for the extra work and research necessary to redesign or create courses with this new focus. The development of those courses was very slow at first, but more and more have been created, often by younger,

untenured faculty.

I was among those that were slow to rise to the occasion. I was and continue to be an enthusiastic supporter of service learning trips and related courses. A service learning component within a regular course was quite a different thing, though. Despite the obvious educational benefits of actual trips to complete service projects on native reservations, it seemed impossible to develop an equally viable experience on campus in central Pennsylvania, especially one that would contribute substantially to an art history course in the arts of Native North America.

At the time, I was already struggling with questions regarding the most valid ways to alter traditional pedagogy for optimum presentation of non-traditional subject matter, as well as issues of exploitation. Long term study of the post-contact history of Native Americans has made me very sensitive to both questions. I am especially determined that neither my research nor what I do in the classroom amounts to yet another way in which Euro-Americans manage to exploit the original inhabitants of the continent. It wasn't clear to me how the attempt to add a community service component would help me to address those issues either.

Furthermore, since there are no reservations in south central Pennsylvania, the only potential resource for a community service project was the archives of the Carlisle Indian School, a few miles away. And it wasn't at all clear, at first, how work in the archives could be linked to an art history course, in any case. I

learned of the archives in conversations with native people I met on various reservations when I was the faculty leader for several service learning trips. It was clear that the archives held a wealth of information of great interest to the people in those communities. Family histories often began and/or ended with the knowledge that a relative had attended the school. Whatever information might exist there could provide data about ancestors, both before and after their arrival at the school, data that was, for many reasons, not available anywhere else

It was also clear that most of the information they were interested in was essentially inaccessable, both because of the costs involved in travelling to Carlisle and because virtually none of the materials there had been catalogued. Without incredible luck, it would take an individual months to ferret out much useful information, if they could find it at all. As I pondered their needs and mine, I came up with what has become an integral part of each class I teach on the arts of Native North America (a two semester sequence).

The primary obstacles to understanding the function and significance of native american art are:

1. difficulties associated with appreciating the alternative world views and models of reality common within those societies and
2. the tenacity of stereotypes, both positive and negative, that are imprinted in our brains from childhood on.

Setting up a service component within these courses, based upon work in the Carlisle archives has addressed both issues in very

effective ways.

In many native models of reality, ideas about reciprocity and balance are fundamental, convictions that perceive the maintenance of balance within the cosmos to be as much a matter of immutable law as the nature and effect of gravity is, within western models of the natural world. The basic conviction is that one simply does not take -- from the environment, from individuals, from anything or anyone -- unless something is given back. If you doso and upset the balance, significant and often dire consequences are the inevitable result. It is those alternative convictions that account, in large part, for the very different look and function of the visual arts in native tradition.

Ideally, pedagogy and course structure, as well as content, should make essential contributions to the body of knowledge students develop within every class. Much within the pedagogy of my courses reinforces these and other basic concepts. The service component, required of every student, presents them in a very concrete way. In order to compensate native communities for the wonderful views of life and art we explore together, every student in every class spends many hours at the archives.

We are engaged in a huge cataloguing project designed to provide native groups throughout North America with precisely the information they would most like to have from the archive.

SLIDE -- periodicals

For the past three years we have been cataloguing all of the

periodicals published by the Carlisle school, focussing on the names, tribal and agency affiliations of any students mentioned. The information is being transferred into a data base that will eventually provide computer access to information on every student and tribe mentioned. We will probably complete the data gathering process within the next year.

In the next phase, students will do research for any native people requesting information on their relatives. Our data will be coordinated with the students' personal files (currently at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.) and the Carlisle Indian School archive photo files, as well as those from the Cumberland County Historical Society. We should be able to provide the student's families and descendents with a wealth of information that simply was not accessible before.

Beyond offering this considerable service, the project has also been valuable in helping the students identify stereotypical attitudes and assumptions about native peoples, through access to some of the primary sources of those attitudes. As soon as they arrived in the New World, the European invaders began to develop stereotypes around the peoples already here. Those ideas were solidified in media imagery, especially from the 19th century onward. Helping students recognize how those stereotypes were constructed and how they affect their own understanding of the people and their art begins to breach the barriers to learning such preconceptions pose.

Reading through these publications reveals how today's stereotypes were created and perpetuated in the media nearly a

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century ago and it does so with a clarity that cannot be achieved through reading textbook analyses of the phenomenon. The attitudes and assumptions that formed the basis for stereotypical images are also obvious in these periodicals. The kindly veil of politically correct language is distinctly absent. Students are continually appalled at the comments of those who were, by far, the most empathetic members of American society at the time.

For example, reading through letters written by whites who employed the students from the Carlisle School in the summer months, one student was struck by their strongly familiar language. His family raises show dogs and these letters mimicked exactly those of customers pleased with their new puppy -- obedient, affectionate, playful, clever (for a dog), etc. In another article, the author argued fervently in favor of the Indian School concept, quoting figures that proved it was cheaper to educate Indians than to kill them all -- without the slightest suggestion that anything but relative expense rendered one option any more acceptable than the other.

A whole other avenue of inquiry opened by access to these publications is the question of self-image and the effect of the Indian School education on native self-definition in the past as well as today.

SLIDES (10 before and after, plus ambiguous attitude slides)

Issues of identity and its definition is a question of primary interest to many, if not most, contemporary native artists. The

archives of the Carlisle Indian School offer a wealth of rich, if poignant information on those issues as well. Now that the data is available, the possibilities for research in this and other areas are legion.

Clearly, the conjunction of community service and curriculum not only provides important avenues to update and enrich the latter, it offers students and faculty rich opportunities to enhance both academic experience and research.

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